

Message Text

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43

ACTION NEA-10

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FM USINT BAGHDAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2248

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 829

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IZ, SY

SUBJECT: IRAQI SYRIAN CONFLICT

REF: BAGHDAD 787; DAMASCUS 2627

1. IRAQI-SYRIAN CONFLICT SHOWS NO SIGN OF ABATING. ON CONTRARY, BORDER INCIDENT INVOLVING MILITARY PATROLS NOW SEEMS DISTINCT POSSIBILITY IN VIEW REPORTS THAT IRAQIS HAVE RESPONDED TO SYRIAN MILITARY MOVEMENTS WITH SOME OF THEIR OWN. IN A NOTE OF JULY 24, IRAQ FORMALLY PROTESTED TO SYRIA OVER 15 PROVOCATIONS ALONG THE BORDER BETWEEN FEBRUARY 27 AND JULY 4. ALLEGATIONS RANGED FROM OVERFLIGHTS OF SYRIAN MILITARY A/C TO USE O HERDSMEN TO GATHER INTELLIGENCE.

2. IRAQ PORPAGANDA CAMPAIGN AGAINST ASAD REGIME NOW PROCEEDING ON TWO TRACKS; ONE A WHOLESALE DENUNCIATION OF
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SYRIAN ACTIONS AGAINST IRAQ (ADN THUS ARAB SOLIDARITY) INCLUDING
1973 DOUBLING OF TRANSIT ROYALTIES FOR KIRKUK OIL, CONTINUAL

WITHOLDING OF EUPHRATES WATERS, AIDING DISSIDENT IRAQI KURDS, AND BLOCKING LAND AND AIR PASSAGE. ASAD ALSO DENOUNCED FOR DEVELOPING CLOSE RELATIONS WITH U.S. AND PLACING RESTRICTIONS ON PALESTINIAN GUERRILLAS. SECOND TRACK IS HIGH ROAD TAKEN BY PRESIDENT BAKR IN JULY 17 SPEECH WHICH STRESSED IRAQ'S PATIENCE AND FOREBEARANCE TOWARD SYRIA IN INTEREST OF ARAB SOLIDARITY AND CALLED FOR CREATION OF NORTHERN FRONT BETWEEN IRAQ AND SYRIA WITH IRAQI TROOPS IN SYRIA, PROVIDING ASAD RENOUNCES RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338 AND GENEVA CONFERENCE. BOTH TRACKS AIMED AT UNDERCUTTING ASAD'S POSITION WITHIN SYRIA AND ARAB WORLD.

3. IN OPINION OF EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR AL-NAGGAR, IRAQ HAS BEEN RELATIVELY SUCCESSFUL IN WINING ARAB SUPPORT AND SYRIA IS INCREASINGLY ISOLATED. THIS WILL ONLY EXACERBATE CONFLICT BECAUSE, IN AL-NAGGAR'S VIEW, PRINCIPAL EXPLANATION FOR SYRIA'S VIOLENT ANTI-IRAQI CAMPAIGN SINCE MARCH WAS ASAD'S PARANOIC FEAR OF ISOLATION. AL-NAGGAR BELIEVES ASAD RESENTED AND FEARED IRAQ'S RAPPROCHEMENT WITH EGYPT AND IRAN WHICH OVERNIGHT TURNED IRAQ INTO A MAJOR THREAT TO HIS REGIME GIVEN LONG STANDING IDEOLOGICAL AND PERSONAL ANTIPATHY BETWEEN IRAQI AND SYRIAN BAATH. AL-NAGGAR DOES NOT BELIEVE CONFLICT WILL LEAD TO MILITARY CONFRONTATION, BUT NEITHER DOES HE THINK IT WILL SOON BE RESOLVED. IDEALLY, HE BELIEVES, IRAQIS WOULD LIKE TO SEE ASAD CONCLUDE AN AGREEMENT ON GOLAN WHICH THEY WOULD USE AGAINST HIM IN EFFORT TO TOPPLE HIM AND BRING ABOUT BAATH REGIME MORE AMENABLE TO IRAQ. NEW PRO-IRAQI SYRIAN REGIME WOULD THEN HAVE ASAD AS SCAPEGOAT FOR GOLAN ACCORD BUT MILITARY THREAT FROM ISRAEL WOULD BE DIMINISHED.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH SUCH A POLICY IS TOTALLY IRRESPONSIBLE, IT MAKES SENSE IN STRICTLY SYRIAN-IRAQI TERMS SINCE BOTH REGIMES APPEAR CONVINCED THAT THEIR VERY EXISTENCE IS AT STAKE AND CAN ONLY BE RESOLVED BY REMOVAL OF ONE. (AL-NAGGAR BELIEVES ASAD IS IN WEAKER POSITION). EGYPTIANS ARE OF COURSE VITALLY CONCERNED WITH FATE OF ASAD REGIME AND I ASSUME THAT AL-NAGGAR BASES HIS ANALYSIS ON EGYPTIAN REPORTING AND INTELLIGENCE FROM DAMASCUS AND CAIRO. HIS ANALYSIS DOES
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SEEM TO PROVIDE EXPLANATION FOR ASAD'S PREOCCUPATION WITH IRAQ, AS REPORTED BY EMBASSY DAMASCUS, SINCE LOGICAL CONCLUSION OF ANALYSIS IS THAT ASAD MUST GET IRAQI BAATH OFF HIS BACK, BY WHATEVER MEANS POSSIBLE, BEFORE CONCLUDING ANY FURTHER AGREEMENTS WITH ISRAEL AND BEFORE IRAQIS GET HIM. HOPEFULLY, RECENT VISIT OF YAMANI AND EFFORTS OF EGYPTIANS AND OTHER WILL SUCCEED IN MODERATING CONFLICT AND THEREBY FORESTALL TURMOIL THAT COULD FOLLOW OVERTHROW OF EITHER SYRIAN OR IRAQI REGIME.
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